



**IS YOUR CHILD
SAFE ONLINE?**

**ONLINE SAFETY
TIPS**

How Human Traffickers Lure Children Online

Human Trafficking is no longer subjected to meeting people in public. Human Traffickers are now able to go into your house without even having to leave theirs. The internet has become the primary resource for grooming.

When traffickers are utilizing the internet /social media platforms to groom children and teenagers, different tactics they will use are:

1. Utilize a teen's desire for romance and friendship.

Most children receive a smartphone between 12 to 13, and most schools are now connected to the internet. Traffickers will often pose as children around the same age as their target to establish a relationship and gain personal information.

2. Develop trust and confidentiality, then manipulate a child by sympathizing with the child's problems and insecurities.

In particular, teens and young adults are susceptible to mental and physical lack of confidence, and traffickers can capitalize on this awkward and complicated phase.

3. Support the emotions and ideas of the child.

Once a trafficker gets to know a child or teen by posing as one of their peers, they'll try to develop a relationship with them by affiliating themselves with the teen's hobbies or different positive aspects of their life.

4. Exploit the child's natural sexual curiosities.

As children start to reach puberty, they naturally become curious about their sexuality and others. The school systems can only teach the children/teens so much before they branch off and start doing their

research. Parents need to sit with their children and have "the talk," as well as discussing the signs and dangers of online predators.

5. Gradually introduce sex into conversations or expose them to pornography to make them feel more comfortable talking about sex.

Sex traffickers manipulate children into being compliant once they've gotten friendly instead of forcing them to do something they won't like. Traffickers will often push a conversation into sexual areas to test a child's limits on what they are willing or not willing to do.

6. Constantly send the child compliments through online messages, send gifts, invest time and money.

Any expensive gifts, or gifts with an unknown origin, should raise red flags. Some examples could include your daughter getting stylish clothing or jewelry in the mail. If your child has a large variety of video games, you aren't sure how he receives them.

7. Cultivate an online relationship that is romantic, controlling, and manipulates the child into being entirely reliant on the trafficker.

If you notice your child/teen is spending too much time online, check in with them about their screen time. If you constantly see them sending messages (although it could just be friends), it is important to ask who they are talking with. Another feature to be vigilant of is using emojis with strangers and how your child could be using them.

8. Create distance between the child's family and friends.

This phase happens once the trafficker can establish trust and privacy with a child. Ultimately, a trafficker's goal is to separate a child/teen from their family and friends and eventually try to get them to leave home. Traffickers do this by making promises of an exciting, hassle-free life designed to follow the youth's dreams.

9. Threaten the child with pornography showcasing the victim to blackmail them into silence.

If a human trafficker successfully wins the trust of a child or teen, they can manipulate them into sending photos or even video. Traffickers can

later use this evidence to blackmail victims with threats to expose them to their families and guilt them into doing what the trafficker wants.

How Human Traffickers Lure Children Using Social Media

Social media connects people, but it also allows easy access for predators to communicate with victims. Traffickers search through apps like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok, looking for vulnerable children and girls. Once they've found a potential target, grooming begins by establishing a connection through a friend request, liking, or commenting on a post.

Main Apps (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.):

In hopes of gaining a large following and lots of friends, many people will accept random friend requests and private messages. Using various tools on these platforms, such as GPS and geo-tagging, and sharing personal information can put people at serious risk.

Dating Apps (Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, Grindr, etc.):

The ever-present risk of being catfished can cause some very real and scary scenarios. These apps have been linked to violent assaults, rapes, theft, abduction, sexual exploitation, blackmail, and child grooming. Make sure your privacy settings are strong so that no one can pinpoint your location. Don't give out your cellphone number, only message on the app's messaging feature. Always meet in a safe area where there will be plenty of people. Don't put yourself into a risky situation.

Video Apps (YouTube, Tik Tok, Twitch, etc.):

Most allow users to see you and send personal messages. Some accounts/platforms are problematic due to inappropriate messages and affection between adults and minors.

Game Apps (Fortnite, Clash of Clans, Minecraft, etc.):

The multi-player environment allows individuals to connect with other users through messaging or gaming headsets. These platforms often have a chatting component that will enable users to chat with strangers from all over the country and worldwide.

Tips For Keeping Your Children Safe Online

1. Talk openly with your child about their online activity

Talk to your child about what they are reading, watching, and who they are communicating with online. Ask your child what sites they visit or apps they use, then go through the apps together. Please discuss what you think is appropriate and remind them that this may be different for other parents and children.

It is also imperative to discuss their online reputation and be careful about how they behave, interact with people, and represent themselves in such a public forum. It is crucial to remind them that most things on the internet can't be deleted without leaving a "footprint."

2. Keep screens and devices where you can see them

Supervise your child's time online, particularly younger children. Keep the computer in a central spot in the home where it's easy to see what your child is doing and viewing online. You can set them to forget Wi-Fi

passcodes for mobile devices so your children can not go online without you knowing.

3. Know your parental controls

Innocent searches online can lead to disastrous results, so it's wise to know how to use the parental controls/search restrictions offered by web browsers, internet service providers, and devices. Although not consistently accurate, parental controls can help prevent your child from seeing and accessing the most violent or sexual material.

4. Know who your children's online friends are

Children and young people can be naïve about who they are chatting with if they are not taught to be cyber wise from an early age. Go through your child's friends list on all their social media apps and gaming apps. Have them explain to you how they met this friend and who this friend is. It's important to be open about the chance that someone they met online may not necessarily be who they claim and could want to inflict harm on them.

5. Explain the importance of privacy on social media and other platforms

Children need to be aware of the risk of personal information or images being made public once they post them on social media. They should be taught to be cautious and considerate about what they post and share. Urge your children to ask themselves before posting anything if the information (name, phone number, home address, email, name of school) or photo is something they would give a stranger. If they answer no, explain why they shouldn't post it.

6. Teach your children to keep their location private

Most apps, networks, and devices have geo-tagging features that make your location freely available and help lead traffickers to your front door. These features should be turned off for privacy and safety reasons. Digital photos also contain data about the time, date, and coordinates of the picture. Some social media platforms automatically hide or remove this data, but not all; it is crucial to research and know which apps share this information.

7. Know and understand how social media operates

Educate yourself on ways to be safe on social networks so that you can give the best advice to your children. Sign up for the social networks and apps your children are using and learn how to use the privacy settings and reporting processes. Please discuss with your child how they can stay safe on social networks, including talking to a trusted person when they are worried or think they are talking to someone unsafe.

If your child uses social networks, be sure they know how to:

- Report inappropriate and offensive posts
- Block someone
- Keep information private.

Two fantastic resources created by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection are,

Protectkidsonline.ca:

Here you will find information about the ever-changing online interests of young people, the potential risks they face, and proactive strategies to help keep your child/adolescent safe while online.

- Interests and risks
- Emerging issues
- Reporting concerning behaviours
- Exposure to Sexually Explicit Material
- Cyberbullying
- Intimate Images
- Sextortion
- Self/Peer Exploitation
- Luring
- Apps

- Phone Safety Tips
- Healthy Relationships
- Healthy Personal Boundaries Online Start Offline
- Monitoring Your Teen's Online Activities
- Parenting Tweens and Teens in the Digital World

Needhelpnow.ca:

This webpage is helpful for both teens and adults who are looking for information on,

- Removing a sexual picture/video from the internet
- Help with cyberbullying and dealing with peers
- Help on how to talk to and support youth in crisis
- Tips for helping a friend/sibling/youth
- Getting emotional support for those in need
- The law and reporting incidents
- FAQs
- Information for parents

Both these websites assist in educating parents and our youth on how to protect themselves when using the internet. If you have some time today, we encourage you to look through these websites and stay updated with privacy settings on both your computer and mobile devices.

This document was produced for the purpose of creating awareness about Human Trafficking in Wellington County.

If you are aware of someone trafficking individuals, report it to the Wellington County OPP at 1-888-310-1122.

If you wish to remain anonymous, contact Crime Stoppers Guelph Wellington on their website www.csgw.tips, or you can also call and leave an anonymous tip at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). If your information leads to an arrest, you may be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$2,000.

Victims of Human Trafficking are encouraged to seek support from Victim Services Wellington via email at victim@vswguelph.on.ca or by calling (519) 824-1212 Ext. 7304.

We Stand With You

